

Pure Reflection Is Still Only a Reflection

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Santos: The holding of the mind upon the reflection of the self in a *sattvic* subtle body is a direct means to self-knowledge by virtue of the fact that if the mirror is pure the reflection is perfect.

Sundari: Yes, correct. We have direct knowledge of the self when ignorance is removed and self-knowledge is firm, self-knowledge means that you know that although the reflection is you, you are not it. The reflection of the self, even though just a reflection, is actually always perfect because the self is always perfect, no matter the state of the mind/mirror. However, if ignorance (impurity/duality) clouds the mirror/mind, we do not see the perfection of the self, the source of the reflection, and cannot know that what we experience all the time is the self, it is who we are. Because of the deluding power of *maya*, we see only a distorted reflection and take it to be who we are. A reflection of the self, the subtle body, although it comes from the self, reflecting off the reflecting medium (awareness plus *maya* = *Isvara* = *gunas*) is neither real or unreal, no matter how pure the mirror of the mind is. It is apparently real. The reflection is known to you (awareness), so cannot be you.

The source and the reflection are the same but they are different, like the light of the moon comes from the sun but is not the sun or the wave is the ocean but the ocean is not the wave – *sat, asat, vilakshanam* – something that is other than the self but is not the object either. Self but not self, a trick of light caused by *maya*. This is probably the most important teaching in Vedanta.

Santos: Is a *sattvic* subtle body identical in nature between apparent *jivas* or will there always be some distortion due to differing levels of *rajas* and *tamas* in the subtle body (i.e. it's impossible to achieve a totally *sattvic* mind, as the *gunas* are always present together).

Sundari: *Sattva* is the nature of the mind, and our ability to experience it depends on the balance of *rajas* and *tamas* present in the mind, which will be different for everyone due to their *karma* and conditioning. You can experience a more or less perfectly *sattvic* mind through *guna* management, especially when all the *vasanas* are rendered non-binding and the doer negated, but *moksa* does not depend on *sattva* and neither does the enlightened person. A mind may be very *sattvic* but still in ignorance of its true nature as the self. Conversely, *rajas* and *tamas* may be expressing in the mind of a self-realised person and not affect them at all, because they know they are *trigunaatita*, beyond the *gunas*.

As the *jivanmukta*, you know who you are and experience the bliss of self-knowledge regardless of how the *gunas* are playing out in the mind. Getting hung up on *sattva* is as much an obstacle to *moksa* as too much *rajas* and *tamas*. We call it the “golden cage” of *sattva*. All the *gunas* are objects known to you. And as you correctly point out, it is impossible to achieve (and maintain) a totally *sattvic* mind due to the ever-changing nature of the *gunas*, which are always present together, with one usually dominating.

Santos: So is the reflection of the self slightly different in appearance depending upon the differing intensity and presence of the incestuous bedfellows within the mainly *sattvic* subtle body?

Sundari: Yes, knowledge of the reflection of the self may differ for everyone due to the way the *gunas* express and how much ignorance remains, but the experience of the self is the same for everyone.

Santos: If I may ask, Sundari, when you are in *yoga* with the reflection of the self, what is it like? Would it be reasonable to concur that the reflection would be similar/the same for awareness moving as me as it would be as awareness moving as you, given that the self being reflected is non-dual and technically it is the same subtle body it is being reflected in.

Sundari: There is only one self, Santos; how can “my” experience of the self be different to yours? All experience is the self, experiencing with or without self-knowledge. I am never “in *yoga* with the self.” I am the self, so I have no need to yoke myself to it. Everything yokes to me because I am the knowledge, I no longer need the teaching, because the teaching of Vedanta removed “my” ignorance (*avidya*) – *samsara*, or belief in duality. Your question implies that there is more than one self or that there is special experience attached to being the self. There is not. See above. The hard and fast knowledge “I am whole and complete, ever-present, unchanging, unconditioned awareness” is just that: **knowledge**. It is not a feeling, intuition or mystical experience. It is ordinary and it is permanent, regardless of what is going on for the *jiva*. It means I see the world through the lens of the self, knowing that whatever I see is me, but I never confuse myself with the objects appearing in me. Even though I can still see through the lens of the person, I know that when I do, the person-lens is operating, and that all I see is perfect because all is *Isvara*.

I hope you are well, and life is getting a little easier and happier.

~ Much love to you from both of us, Sundari